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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DURBAN 000036

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/S RUSH MARBURG

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SUBJECT: DURBAN -- INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY PROTESTS AGAINST STREET NAMING POLICY; BLAMES ANC FOR INCREASED TENSIONS

REF: DURBAN 30

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CLASSIFIED BY: CASEY SCHMIDT, POL/ECONOFF, POL, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

SUMMARY:

¶1. (U) On Saturday 21 June, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) organized a march in downtown Durban to protest the municipality's decision to change the name of a highway named after party founder Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, highlighting growing tension between the IFP and the African National Congress (ANC; reftel). On the day of the march, IFP supporters allegedly looted shops, set up roadblocks, and forced civilians to join the demonstration, prompting the South African Police Services (SAPS) to respond with tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets. End Summary.

¶2. (U) According to local press reports, more than 10,000 supporters of the IFP marched through Durban's central business district protesting the municipality's street naming policy, particularly the proposed change of a highway named after party founder Mangosuthu Buthelezi to late ANC activist, Griffiths Mxenge. During the march, IFP supporters allegedly looted shops, burned tires, and established roadblocks along the contested highway, bringing the city to a "standstill." Local press also reported that IFP supporters had forced civilians to join the march, prompting the local police to intervene using tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets. No injuries or arrests were reported. South African Police Service officers corroborated with us the reports of looting, roadblocks, and IFP supporters intimidating residents to join the demonstration.

¶3. (C) According to Durban Deputy Mayor Logie Naidoo (ANC), the IFP march to City Hall was peaceful but that many of the demonstrators (numbering, he estimated, 6-7,000) were carrying illegal weapons such as axes and clubs. Following a petition handover from the marchers to the Deputy Mayor, Naidoo said the marchers left and that was when looting began. Police, he explained, had to bring in reinforcements and they were eventually forced to use rubber bullets and water cannon. Naidoo accused marchers of forcing people to join the demonstration and said that police had videotape of such activity.

14. (C) Naidoo understood that the IFP had no problem with street name changes in general, just with changing the name of Mangosuthu Highway. The city's process was complete and the changes were to be instituted very soon added the Deputy Mayor. Nevertheless, he believed there were IFP/ANC discussions underway at the provincial level on the issue, something that the IFP has reportedly denied. Asked about tensions between the ANC and IFP, Naidoo blamed IFP provincial legislature leader Lionel Mtshali (the last IFP Premier in KZN) for building tension between the two parties after the IFP's provincial defeat in 2004.

15. (C) On 23 June, Pol/Econoff met with IFP Secretary General, Rev. Musa Zondi, and National Organizer, Albert Mncwango, to discuss the press allegations and the growing tension between the IFP and the ANC. Both officials claimed that as many as 20,000 IFP supporters gathered in a peaceful demonstration to protest not only the ANC's street naming policy, but also the party's image presented in South Africa's national history text books. According to Rev. Zondi, the statements of violence and looting made by the press were distorted and unfounded. He claimed there were no acts of violence along the route of the march and the looting was carried out afterwards by criminals taking advantage of the situation. Mncwango also claimed that the police had provoked the violence by blocking IFP supporters from joining the march, eventually forcing the police to use tear gas and water cannons.

16. (C) Both IFP officials claimed that tension with the ANC is rising because of the manner in which the ANC has implemented the street renaming policy. According to Rev. Zondi, the ANC has introduced the policy without input from other concerned parties or the will of the people, highlighting a growing trend of political exclusion. He explained that the ANC is effectively

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erasing the names of people who have made significant contributions to the city and people of Durban and KwaZulu-Natal. Regarding the text books, Mncwango said that the ANC has published a national history text book that portrays the party as an obstructionist to the national reconciliation process. Both officials said that they have brought these issues forward to the regional and national government, but there is no ongoing dialogue. Rev. Zondi stated that ANC President Jacob Zuma has promised to take up the issue of street renaming at the national level, but has yet to do so.

COMMENT

17. (C) Given the violent history between the ANC and IFP in KwaZulu-Natal, events such as these are important to follow. While we do not expect anything like what happened in the past, the combination of these events (as reported in reftel) as well as upcoming national and provincial elections in March/April 2009 make the atmosphere more tense than usual. In addition, the divisions within the ANC at national level make that organization less predictable and less able to discipline itself than usual, a recipe for provincial, regional and local level ANC organs to act more freely in ways that the national level might not usually support.
YOUNG